DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 279 044 CS 505 509

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TITLE Intrapersonal Communication in Interpersonal Communication.
PUB DATE 15 Nov 86
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (72nd, Chicago, IL, November 13-16, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communication Research; *Individual Development; Individual Psychology; *Interpersonal Communication; *Interpersonal Relationship; Self Actualization; Social Cognition; Speech Communication; *Textbook Content; Textbook Preparation; Textbook Publication; *Textbook Research
IDENTIFIERS *Intrapersonal Communication

ABSTRACT

Textbook authors have the responsibility to present a complete and accurate account of a specific discipline. In the field of interpersonal communication, intrapersonal communication is of great importance. Textbooks tend to take two approaches to intrapersonal communication. One approach treats intrapersonal communication as essentially the same as interpersonal communication except that the sender and receiver are the same. The other treats intrapersonal communication as an element of personality improvement. The most effective treatment of intrapersonal communication in interpersonal communication texts will derive from a judicious blending of the two approaches. A model of intrapersonal communication might begin with the notion that from infancy, one's earliest communications are more intrapersonal than interpersonal. As one becomes socially mature, the focus becomes more interpersonal or sociological, and as intimate relationships develop, interpersonal relationships begin to resemble intrapersonal relationships. Intrapersonal communication is an area to which much greater attention must be given by researchers and theorists so that textbook writers will have a firm base on which to draw. Further, interpersonal communication textbook authors need to devote more attention to intrapersonal communication. (SRT)

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Intrapersonal Communication in Interpersonal Communication

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Textbook authors are, in one sense at least, the academic gatekeepers of their disciplines. For those who read the journals and attend the conventions, our gatekeeping function is minimal. If we omit a crucial concept or do a theory some injustice, insertions or corrections can be easily made. But, for the vast group of others who do not read the journals, who do not attend conventions, or who are teaching outside their areas of specialization, our gatekeeping function is significant. For these people and their students, the textbook represents a complete and accurate account of the discipline--regardless of how incomplete or how inaccurate that account may be in reality.

In referring to us as textbook authors I do not mean to imply that we do not also function in other roles as well, for example, as researchers and as theorists; most of us have in the past and some of us still do. Rather, I focus here on the text author as text author and not as the well-rounded scholar-teacher we are all also. As text authors, our gatekeeping role is to reflect the best of the research, theory, and application reported in our journals and discussed at our conventions as well as that which is relevant from other and related fields. In that

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role we are at our best with a rich, consistent, insightful research-theory base. In interpersonal communication we do not have that base, at least not the base that the social psychology text author has and certainly not anywhere near the base that the authors of introductory economics, history, or physiology texts have. It would, for example, be relatively easy to write a basic text in calculus or organic chemistry. Here all the author needs is a basic knowledge of the field, the ability to write with relative clarity, and a publisher with the knowledge and resources to put the package together.

Yet, the research in interpersonal communication is growing rapidly, not only in quantity but also in quality. Research by James McCroskey on apprehension and, more recently, on power, by Maryann Fitzpatrick on relational adjustment, by Michael Hecht on communication satisfaction, and by Margaret McLaughlin on conversational analysis are just a few of the many examples that come quickly to mind. And, appropriately, the theory is developing too. Contributions by Brian Spitzberg, Rebecca Rubin and others on competence, by Leslie Baxter on relational deterioration, by Dominick Infante and Andrew Rancer on argumentativeness--to cite, again, just a few of the many examples possible--have added greatly to our much-needed theoretical base.

In writing the first edition of The Interpersonal Communication Book (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) my problem was to find material that would amplify and support some of the principles we had taken for granted. For the most part I had

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then to rely on the insights of sociologists and psychologists. Communication scholars in 1975 had said relatively little about interpersonal communication in any meaningful and insightful way. Fortunately, the early and excellent texts such as John Keltner's Interpersonal Communication (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1970), Kim Giffin and Bobby Patton's Fundamentals of Interpersonal Communication (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), and James McCroskey, Carl Larson, and Mark Knapp's An Introduction to Interpersonal Communication (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971) paved the way. In a sense, these early texts defined the field of interpersonal communication, identified key concepts and theories, and reviewed, analyzed, and synthesized the growing and disparate literature bearing on interpersonal communication processes. Nevertheless, these texts and many that were to come shortly after them built on a theory and research base that was at best meager. The Giffin and Patton and the McCroskey, Larson, and Knapp books, for example, were exceptionally slim volumes and both of them drew heavily for their substance on areas we would now regard as peripheral to interpersonal communication. The Keltner book, although longer, actually included a great deal that had little if anything to do with interpersonal communication.

In writing the fourth edition and in doing the planning for the fifth edition, the problem is no longer finding material but rather sifting through the vast amounts of research and theory--now, happily, primarily in communication journals by communication scholars--and putting it into a form that beginning

students can understand, internalize, and apply.

Intrapersonal Communication

When we come to intrapersonal communication as a separate area and to intrapersonal communication as it relates to interpersonal communication, the picture changes drastically. On the one hand there is the vast literature of personality, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis that is surely relevant in some way to intrapersonal communication. If one accepts the notion that intrapersonal communication effectiveness, for example, is the same as or at least similar to psychological well-being or the healthy personality then the problem for the textbook author is not one of finding material but of (again) sifting through a vast literature and identifying the insights pertaining to self-talk that are imbedded in these theoretical and therapeutic approaches. If one assumes that intrapersonal communication is identical with or at least similar to thinking then the problem is essentially the same--only here we would have to deal with, for example, the literature of cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics.

If, on the other hand, one assumes that intrapersonal communication is essentially the same as interpersonal communication except that in intrapersonal communication, the source and receiver are the same person, then the problem for the textbook author is different and revolves around the identification of the similarities and differences between these

two modes of communication, the alterations that these differences demand in our communication principles, and how intrapersonal and interpersonal processes impact on each other. And, if we are especially brave or foolish or both, we might attempt to explain how we can improve our intrapersonal communication and how this improvement may better interpersonal communication.

On the surface textbook authors have opted for the latter approach--that intrapersonal and interpersonal communication are essentially the same. In their definitional chapters or units, it is clearly this approach that is presented. Yet, in practice--if we look at what the interpersonal texts say about intrapersonal communication or what they do with the relevant concepts--most authors have really opted for the personality-improvement model.

For example, although we say that intrapersonal communication and interpersonal communication are essentially the same (at the very least, we utilize the same concepts and processes in explaining the two forms of communication and we construct very similar models, often indicating that a change in one or two elements in the interpersonal model will yield an intrapersonal model and vice versa), we generally leave the topic after we have offered this rather meaningless statement. Most authors, for example, ignore the role of intrapersonal communication in the development of friendship and love relationships, in family interactions, in the maintenance and deterioration of relationships, in the repair of relationships.

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Further, we actively promote the personality-improvement model in our units on self-concept and self-awareness. Here we explain how to develop a more positive self-concept and how to increase self-awareness. Even when we talk about the connections between interpersonal and intrapersonal communication in, for example, our discussions of self-disclosure we utilize the personality-improvement model. Here, for example, we suggest that through the interpersonal process of self-disclosure we will understand ourselves better, deal with our intrapersonal guilt more effectively, and feel more positively about ourselves.

That these discussions utilize the personality-improvement model is not to be taken negatively. These discussions are actually quite good and are surely useful to the beginning student. Their popularity and usefulness is at least partly attested to by the increase in the size of these discussions in the interpersonal texts that have survived several editions. Very likely the most effective treatment of intrapersonal communication in interpersonal communication texts will derive from a judicious blending of the two approaches.

Importance of Intrapersonal Communication

The difficulties involved in identifying the role of intrapersonal communication in interpersonal communication and in integrating the relevant material into our existing conceptions of interpersonal communication might easily lead the tired and often hagged textbook author to avoid the topic and the relevant

issues entirely. The reason these difficulties do not lead to total neglect is simple: we know that intrapersonal communication is crucial to interpersonal communication as a field of study and in terms of developing effectiveness principles.

Although speaking only of communication problems, Abraham Maslow, in Floyd Matson and Ashley Montagu's influential The Human Dialogue: Perspectives on Communication (New York: Free Press, 1967), indicates the centrality of intrapersonal communication:

> My general thesis is that many of the communication difficulties between persons are the by product of communication barriers within the person; and that communication between the person and the world, to and fro, depends largely on their isomorphism (or similar of structure or form); that the world can communicate to a person only that of which it is worthy, that which he deserves or is 'up to'; that to a large extent, he can receive from the world, and give to the world, only that which he himself is. As Kierkegaard said of a certain book, "Such words are like mirrors; if an ape peeps in, no apostle will look out." Goethe's contention was that we can fully understand only what we really love.

The relevance of intrapersonal to interpersonal communication is expressed from a somewhat different perspective

in the principle of immanent reference articulated by Robert Pittinger, Charles Hockett and John Danehy in their insightful The First Five Minutes: A Sample of Microscopic Interview Analysis (Ithaca, N.Y.: Paul Martineau, 1960):

> No matter what else human begins may be communicating about, or may think they are communicating about, they are always communicating about themselves, about one another, and about the immediate context of the communication.

One would assume that interpersonal communication textbook authors would clearly agree with this centrality. Interestingly enough, of the interpersonal texts examined, only one has intrapersonal communication in the index and few of these texts even mention intrapersonal communication in the text proper. But, in [DeVito's] The Interpersonal Communication Book, 4th ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) we read (and I take this to be the truth) that "it is essential to understand intrapersonal communication if we are fully to understand interpersonal communication."

The Search for a Model

The problem then is clear. Though many interpersonal textbook authors do, we cannot (or at least should not) ingore intrapersonal communication. It is too important and too central to interpersonal interaction and effectiveness to be avoided or

neglected or slighted. Nor, however, can we persist in giving mere lip service to its importance and never really integrating intrapersonal communication into interpersonal communication. We need a model, a point of view, a beginning perspective to guide our initial searches toward this much needed integration.

Several attempts have been made in this direction. One of the earliest from the field of communication came from Larry L. Barker and Gordon Wiseman in their "A Model of Intrapersonal Communication" (Journal of Communication 16 (1966): 172-179) and elaborated on somewhat in one of the few intrapersonal communication books our field has produced, Larry Barker and Renee Edwards, Intrapersonal Communication (Dubuque, Iowa: Gorsuch Scarisbrick, 1980). Carolyn Del Polito has given us another model in her Intrapersonal Communication (Menlo Park, Calif.: Cummings, 1977). More recent models have been presented by John R. Johnson in "The Role of Inner Speech in Human Communication" (Communication Education 33 (July 1984): 211-222). All of these models and perspectives have been insightful and thought-provoking but have resulted in little integration between the clearly related interpersonal and intrapersonal communication domains. Perhaps another model is still needed.

An Elementary (Illustrative) Model

We come into the world largely as intrapersonal communicators. Our early verbal and nonverbal behaviors are probably more intrapersonal than interpersonal. We babble,

imitating our own speech, before we engage in echolalia where we imitate the speech of those around us. Similarly, our primary focus of touch during our infant months is our own body. Only later do we focus on touching others. Our perhaps innate ability to make distinctions among the sounds of others notwithstanding, our earliest communications are, it would seem, more intrapersonal than interpersonal.

A significant number of people will remain intrapersonally focused, almost exclusively--talking only to themselves and hearing only inner voices. Some of these we call geniuses; some we call insane. Most of us, however, develop normally, that is, into psychologically well adjusted individuals with a proper balance of self and other focus. We become, in other words, interpersonally oriented. Put differently, from an almost exclusive intrapersonal or psychological focus, we become interpersonally or sociologically focused. We are born intrapersonal creatures but learn to be interpersonal creatures. We learn the rules and codes of our social system. To paraphrase an old model, we learn when to say what to whom.

As our relationships develop and become more intimate--as Gerald Miller has pointed out in a view of interpersonal communication that I find insightful but not definitional--we abandon the sociological roles and rules and base our interpersonal behavior on psychological roles and mutually established rules. The more intimate the relationship becomes, the more the interpersonal relationship resembles an intrapersonal relationship. The closer a relationship becomes,

the more the two people act as one--a view popularized in romantic fiction but supported in a variety of ways in the literature. This notion echoes Altman and Taylor's social penetration theory and especially the concept of depth. Research on the similarity of dress and speech among intimately involved couples likewise supports this general assumption. Truman Capote's definition of love as never having to finish your sentences--something all lovers have probably experienced--speaks directly to this idea that as the relationship gets more intimate, it approaches in form and content an intrapersonal relationship.

Of course there is nothing truly new about this admittedly obvious view. The reason I raise it and take these few minutes to discuss it is that it puts into focus the importance of intrapersonal communication in interpersonal communication and especially in interpersonal relationships. More important, it allows us to raise and explore questions that are a bit different from those that assume an alternative view or from those that assume a close but unspecififed association between intrapersonal and interpersonal communication.

If this approach has any utility, then it should suggest questions that would not be raised otherwise. That is, I take the development of useful hypotheses as the ultimate test. Two examples may be offered in preliminary exploration.

Example one. Our current model of close but unspecified relationships tells us that internal conflicts will manifest themselves interpersonally but beyond that it rarely goes. Our

intrapersonal-to-interpersonal model, however, specifies a bit more clearly that internal conflicts will manifest themselves interpersonally in proportion to the depth or intimacy of the relationship. In non-intimate relationships, our internal conflicts may influence the interaction hardly at all. In intimate relationships, these internal conflicts will influence the interaction greatly and may, in fact, be externalized throughout the interaction.

Example two. Research tells us that relationships based on similarities are more likely to develop and endure than are relationships based on complementarities. The reasons for this are not especially clear, although the research evidence is quite extensive. One reason, I think, is that a similar other is more likely to develop an interpersonal relationship resembling an intrapersonal relationship than is an opposite or complementary other. Complementary partners are, by definition, opposites; a relationship resembling an intrapersonal one would probably necessitate a restructing of one or both partners. Of course, this notion is not new either. Freud argued that the development of love was essentially narcissistic in origin. It was originally a love of self. From this self-love we progressed to a love for a parent. When incest taboos guided us away from this to a love of some "unrelated other," our preference for similarity moved us back to an essentially--though conveniently disguised--narcissistic love of self in our selection of an other of high similarity.

Intrapersonal Communication in Interpersonal Communication Texts

The place of intrapersonal communication in interpersonal communication texts generally and in The Interpersonal Communication Book specifically is not as easy a question to answer as I thought it would be when I accepted this assignment. What I do know or at least currently think about this question is:

1. Intrapersonal communication is central to an understanding of interpersonal communication and especially to such areas as conflict, relationship development, maintenance, deterioration, and repair.

2. Intrapersonal communication is an area to which much greater attention must be given by researchers and theorists so that textbook writers will have a firm base on which to draw. We should not make the assumption that intrapersonal communication is equivalent to thinking or that intrapersonal skills are exclusively personality improvements and that intrapersonal communication is thus the province of the psychologist.

3. Intrapersonal communication is an area unto itself but also an area that is intimately connected with interpersonal communication and other areas as well. [In the paper on fundamentals of communication and the two papers on public

speaking, I'm sure that will be demonstrated.] Thus, courses in intrapersonal communication should be developed and intrapersonal research and theory need to be integrated into our other courses. Since this is a meeting devoted to textbooks, it is perhaps not inappropriate to say to the publishers that here is an opportunity for you to help this area grow by responding to the importance of the area by publishing textbooks in intrapersonal communication before there are a sufficient number of courses to justify the initial expense. Just like the Kathleen Galvin and Bernard Brommel, Family Communication (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1982) book encouraged departments to develop courses in family communication by clearly identifying the relevant research and theory and the possible parameters of this new field--as had John Keltner's Interpersonal Communication helped to develop courses in interpersonal communication years earlier--so should books in intrapersonal communication help to stimulate the development of courses in this area.

4. Interpersonal communication textbook authors need to devote more attention to intrapersonal communication. Stating its importance in the first chapter and doing nothing more about it is no longer justified. The standard units on self-awareness and self-concept are beginning points but not sufficient. Intrapersonal communication concepts need to be applied to all aspects of interpersonal

communication--to perception, conflict, power, attraction, friendship, love, and relationship development, deterioration, and repair--in short, to all the areas we consider central to interpersonal communication.

We need to specify how intrapersonal communication operates, how it can be made more effective, how it influences interpersonal effectiveness, how it sets up barriers to relational development, how it influences our perceptions of self and others.

We need to go back to square one and ask: What is intrapersonal communication? How does it operate? What does it influence? How can it be made more effective for intrapersonal as well as interpersonal purposes?

Paper prepared for "The Textbook Authors' Approaches to Intrapersonal Communication," Basic Course Committee session, Seventy-second Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (Chicago, November 15, 1986).